UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Distr: GENERAL

E/ECA/CM.17/24
26 February 1991

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Twelfth meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
29 April to 7 May 1991

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Twenty-sixth session of the Commission/ seventeenth meeting of the Conference of Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
9 to 13 May 1991

STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS

M91-281

INTRODUCTION

1. By resolution 242 (XI) of 23 February 1973 and a number of subsequent decisions relating to personnel and administrative questions, the Conference of Ministers requested the Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to provide biennial reports on issues of general administration and personnel management of interest to member States. This report is therefore submitted in compliance with those decisions as an update of the last report submitted to the Conference in 1989.

2. The report specifically covers activities in the area of personnel management financial resources availability; and progress made in the implementation of the additional conference facilities construction project. For a better understanding of the staffing situation in the ECA secretariat, detailed statistical information is provided in the annexes to this report. It should be pointed out from the outset that in the area of personnel, this report deals only with professional posts in the category which is subject to the principle of geographical distribution.

I. STAFFING STRUCTURE

3. The staffing structure of the United Nations Secretariat consists of two main categories:

(a) Posts of a continuing nature, whether established by decision of the General Assembly and funded from the regular budget or funded from overhead resources; and

(b) Posts of short-term duration, funded from project or extrabudgetary resources.

A. Principle of geographical distribution

4. The United Nations policy guidelines on recruitment of staff in the category which is subject to the principle of geographical distribution are contained in the Charter, particularly Articles 8 and 101. Article 101, paragraph 3 states that "the paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. Due regard shall be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible." Thus, the Charter provides for the recruitment of staff of ECA from countries outside the African region, so long as due regard is paid to the above principle. In practice, this principle sets the range, i.e., lower and upper limits for the number of staff in this category which any Member State may normally have in the whole United Nations Secretariat, of which ECA is part. This principle of geographical distribution is based on a formula established by the General Assembly. For example, the vast majority of African Member States have an agreed range of between 2 and 14 staff members.

5. At present, 61 countries are represented in the ECA secretariat of which 43 Member States are African and 18 from outside Africa. As of 31 December 1990, ECA had a total of 211 professional posts of the regular budget. Among these, 166 are encumbered by staff members of the African region (see annex I) as compared to 162 in 1989; and non-African Member States account for 27 (see annex II), giving 78.6 and 12.7 per cent respectively. Nine African countries remain still

unrepresented as compared to 10 during the previous period. These are Angola, Cape Verde, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and Sao Tome and Principe. Efforts are continuing to get more countries represented.

B. Status of recruitment

6. In the past years, adverse comments were made about ECA for what was regarded as inability to utilize resources made available because of the high rate of vacancies which existed. Indeed two years ago, the ECA staffing table showed 54 posts as vacant giving a vacancy rate of 25.7 per cent. The situation has improved remarkably, to the extent that today the vacancy rate has been brought down during the past two years to 8.5 per cent. Further, even that percentage includes posts projected to become vacant in the course of this year as a result of retirements.

C. Training, staff development and career development

7. Occupational and language training activities continued to be offered during the 1989-1990 period. Staff members enroled in Arabic, English and French regular language training courses numbered 672 in 1989 and 695 in 1990 respectively, while those in English and French shorthand courses numbered 44 in 1989 and 38 in 1990; 136 seminars were conducted in 1989 and 43 in 1990.

8. Areas covered by occupational training courses, workshops and seminars included: Induction and Secretariat Orientation courses; Personal Computer courses such as Disk Operating System (DOS), WordPerfect 5.1, Lotus 1-2-3, and dBASE IV; Supervision and Train-the-Trainer.

9. The professional examination, G to P (for promotion from General Service to Professional category), the Language Proficiency Examination (LPE) for linguistic balance in the secretariat, the French/English/Arabic Translators/Precis-Writers, Proof-readers and Verbatim Reporters were organized for staff members in 1989 and 1990, providing opportunities for career development and advancement of individual staff members.

D. Status of women in the secretariat

10. Pursuant to the General Assembly resolution to increase representation of women in the secretariat to a target of 30 per cent by the end of 1990 and in accordance with the statement made two years ago to institute a monitoring system which would provide an overview of changes in the status and representation of women, within the secretariat a "Task Force on Women in ECA" (TAFWE) has been established and has since made a valuable contribution in advising the Executive Secretary on policies related to recruitment and career development of women in the secretariat. Thanks to all those combined efforts, representation of women has been raised during the period under review from 11.5 to 16.3 per cent, a fact that was highly commended by the General Assembly at its last session.

II. CONFERENCE FACILITIES

A. Status and development of the construction project

11. Since the last reporting period, the activities undertaken in compliance with General Assembly resolution 42/211 of 21 December 1987 included the following:

(a) A supplementary agreement to the Headquarters Agreement was signed on 18 January 1990 whereby the Government of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia granted to the United Nations an additional piece of land totalling 42,000 m^2 as the site for the construction project. On the same day by exchange of letters, the Government guaranteed inter alia, duty-free importation of materials and equipment for the construction project;

(b) The design development phase was completed and bills of quantities and other necessary render documents were finalized;

(c) Studies were carried out for the sitting of a satellite earth station required to support the communications requirements of ECA, including the new conference facilities, as well as other United Nations offices and activities in Ethiopia. A new digital telephone system compatible with the world-wide United Nations communications system was also included in these studies;

(d) Advertisements inviting applications for pre-qualification from construction contractors were published worldwide in March 1990. However, owing to relatively limited response, the deadline was extended by one month. By that date, 34 contractors from 16 countries had submitted expressions of interest;

(e) Pre-qualification review of interested contractors was completed in late May and invitations to tender were issued in June 1990 to 17 contractors/consortia representing firms from 12 countries;

(f) By mid-August the host Government had completed clearing the construction site;

(g) A number of contractors requested extension of the tendering period ranging from two to ten weeks. It was considered that an extension of the tendering period would be in the interest of the projet and consequently an extension of 20 days was granted. After further requests from the contractors, an additional 14-day extension was granted. Tenders were received on 18 October 1990 from 10 contractors;

(h) Detailed review and analysis of the tenders by the quantity surveyor, the architects/engineers and the United Nations was in early February and the lowest acceptable bidder was approved on the fifteenth of the same month in the sum of $US 78,523,400;

(i) The Construction Agreement was signed between United Nations and the selected contractor on 22 February 1991. On the same day, the ground-breaking ceremony was performed by the President of the host Government;

(j) The estimated cost of the entire project at September 1990 prices is $US 107,576,900 and construction is expected to take 36 months from 29 April 1991.

B. Conference Services

12. During the period under review ECA continued to service conferences with the staff on board, supplemented by recruitment of freelancers, particularly translators and interpreters.

13. However, the situation became critical owing to a high rate of vacancy in its translation services. This is the due to the policy currently implemented in the United Nations Secretariat, including ECA, which provides that translators' posts are filled from a roster of successful candidates who have passed a competitive examination in one of the official United Nations languages. These examinations are held at intervals depending on the number of vacancies and the number of available candidates on the roster at a given time. Under the same policy, the successful candidates are assigned to vacant posts at all United Nations duty stations. At present, the roster of the United Nations is totally depleted.

14. Emphasis in conducting competitive examination is being placed on recruitment of candidates from the countries of the ECA region. In particular, the General Assembly, in its resolution 45/248, Part B, Section II of 21 December 1990, requested the Secretary-General, inter alia, to take action for the revival of a training programme for translator/precis-writer in all official languages of ECA, compatible in quality with other similar United Nations training programmes; to make every effort to utilize existing facilities and expertise within the region; to take appropriate measures to ensure the immediate recruitment of those candidates who, after completing their training, have passed the competitive translator/precis-writer examination and to report to the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session on measures taken, in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

15. Indeed, the Secretariat is looking into all possibilities as required by the resolution and it is expected that translation and interpretation services for all official languages in the Economic Commission for Africa will see a substantial improvement.

III. OFFICE AUTOMATION

16. A review of the level of office automation at ECA was conducted in late 1989 with a view to assessing the needs of the Commission for modern computer technology for servicing its activities. The review revealed that there were unusually severe operating restrictions on ECA owing to outdated technical facilities. Only one unit, the documents typing pool, was reasonably well equipped with electronic office machinery. There are some 100 personal computers and 40 printers available for the whole of ECA, as compared to identified needs for some 360 additional micro-computers and 300 printers. Typing facilities were wholly inadequate. Most printing and reproduction machines were out of order for lack of spare parts or were beyond economical repair. Very little use was made of word-processing, spreadsheet, database of desktop publishing software. Few qualified technicians were available, although more can be trained by local institutions. In summary, the review did indicate that

the ability of ECA to fulfil its mandate was greatly hampered by the technical backwardness of its facilities.

17. At its summer 1990 session, the Economic and Social Council reviewed and took note of the ECA Council of Ministers resolution 682 (XXV), entitle 'Improving technical facilities of the Economic Commission for Africa'. Under the terms of that resolution, the Secretary-General was urged to provide the ECA secretariat with the necessary office automation and computing equipment for its optimal functioning and for better service to member States.

18. It is against that background that the improvement of office automation capability of ECA was deemed to be urgent, and appropriations were made available at the last session of the General Assembly to proceed with the implementation of the office automation project.

A. Components and characteristics of the project

19. Following appropriation of funds for the project, implementation commenced almost immediately by procurement of both the hardware and software. Installation and training started in February 1991 and has proceeded smoothly as a result of prior careful planning and co-ordination between ECA and Headquarters.

20. The project includes the following components:

(a) Acquisition of micro-computers and other equipment and software;

(b) Installation;

(c) Staffs training programme;

(d) Maintenance arrangements.

21. It is estimated that the acquisition and installation phases of the project will be completed in the first four months of 1991 and the staff training programme will commence after the equipment is installed and would require a five to six month period. An Information Systems Section in the Division of Administration and Conference Services will have primary responsibility for project implementation and management.

B. Printing facilities

22. There has been a clear need to upgrade and modernize ECA's printing facilities, partly because of the introduction of personal computers for word-processing.

23. An extensive study was conducted in 1990 to determine the needs, and to specify the equipment to be acquired. The first batch of equipment has already been installed, and the scheme will be finalized by the end of 1991.

24. The aim of the upgrading is to improve the timeliness and quality of documents and publications. It includes the creation of an electronic publishing unit, as well as modernization of printing equipment, which will obliterate present manual production processes.

C. Estimated full cost

25. It is estimated that the implementation of the automation projects in 1991 will have a total cost of $US 2,898,000.

IV. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

26. The initial regular budget appropriations to ECA for the biennium 1990-1991 amount to $US 88,799,900 compared with $US 51,207,200 final budget appropriations approved by the General Assembly for the biennium 1988-1989. This reflects an increase of $US 37,592,700 in regular budget resources between the 1988-1989 and 1990-1991 biennia. Regular budget allotments so far received for 1990-1991 amount to $US 34,548,700 and estimated allotments for 1991 will be $US 44,251,200. The increase in the appropriations in the 1990-1991 biennium and subsequent increase in the 1991 allotments stems from the fact that in 1991 there will be more activities relating to the construction project in Addis Ababa since this is the time when actual construction will begin. It is expected that the total allotments for the whole biennium will be approximately equal to the appropriations.

27. Extrabudgetary expenditures in support of ECA's operational and substantive activities for the biennium 19901991 are estimated at $US 30,283,700 compared with actual expenditures incurred for the 1988-1989 biennium which stood at $US 27,694,845.

28. This report is submitted to the Conference of Ministers for information.

Annex I

Professional posts subject to geographical distribution (African countries) as of 31 December 1990

	USG	D-2	D-1	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2/1	Total ECA	Total UN	Desirable Range
Algeria	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	19	5-14
Angola	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2-14
Benin	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	4	7	2-14
Botswana	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	2-14
Burkina Faso	-	-	1	2	1	1	1	6	6	2-14
Burundi	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	4	10	2-14
Cameroon	-	1	-	1	2	3	1	8	14	2-14
Cape Verde	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2-14
Central African Republic	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	4	2-14
Chad	-	-	-	1	-	2	-	3	3	2-14
Comoros	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	2-14
Congo	-	-	-	2	1	1	-	4	7	2-14
Côte d'Ivoire	-	-	-	-	2	3	2	7	11	3-14
Djibouti	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2-14
Egypt	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	10	4-14
Equatorial Guinea	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	2-14
Ethiopia	-	-	-	2	2	3	4	11	29	3-14
Gabon	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	3	2-14
Gambia	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	3	8	2-14
Ghana	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	15	3-14
Guinea	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	6	2-14
Guinea Bissau	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2-14
Kenya	-	-	1	1	3	-	-	5	15	3-14
Lesotho	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	7	2-14
Liberia	-	-	-	1	-	1	3	5	10	2-14
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	7	6-16
Madagascar	-	-	1	-	2	1	2	6	9	2-14
Malawi	-	-	2	3	2	2	-	9	9	2-14

Professional posts subject to geographical distribution (African countries) as of 31 December 1990 (cont'd)

	USG	D-2	D-1	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2/1	Total ECA	Total UN	Desirable Range
Mali	-	-	1	-	5	4	1	11	11	2-14
Mauritania	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	5	2-14
Mauritius	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	13	2-14
Morocco	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	11	3-14
Mozambique	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2-14
Namibia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2-14
Niger	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	2	4	2-14
Nigeria	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	4	15	8-17
Rwanda	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	3	2-14
Sao Tome and Principe	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2-14
Senegal	-	-	1	-	2	6	3	12	16	2-14
Seychelles	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2-14
Sierra Leone	-	-	-	2	3	-	-	5	14	2-14
Somalia	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	12	2-14
South Africa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	10-19
Sudan	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	4	10	3-14
Swaziland	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	4	2-14
Togo	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	3	6	2-14
Tunisia	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	21	3-14
Uganda	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	5	14	3-14
United Republic of Tanzania	-	-	-	1	5	1	1	8	19	3-14
Zaire	-	-	1	-	2	3	-	6	15	3-14
Zambia	-	-	-	1	1	3	-	5	10	2-14
Zimbabwe	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	2	7	3-14
TOTAL	1	1	13	28	42	55	28	168		

Annex II

Professional posts subject to geographical distribution (non-African countries) as of 31 December 1990

	USG	D-2	D-1	P-5	P-4	P-3	P-2/1	Total ECA	Total UN	Desirable range
Australia	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	2	27	26-35
Brazil	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	28	27-37
Canada	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	3	53	45-61
Finland	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	11	10-19
France	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	107	86-116
Germany	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	126	126-170
India	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	37	29-39
Israel	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	14	5-15
Jamaica	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	17	2-14
Philippines	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	65	5-15
Spain	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	30	31-42
Sweden	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	27	20-30
Switzerland	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	14	
United Kingdom	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	84	68-93
United States of America	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	385	327-442
USSR	-	-	-	1	3	-	2	6	157	137-185
TOTAL	-	-	1	5	9	7	5	27		